

# Welcome to the National Trading Standards (NTS) Scam Marshal Newsletter: April 2022

Total Scam Marshals across the UK: 2,150



**NATIONAL  
TRADING  
STANDARDS**  
Scams Team

## Doorstep Crime Campaign

### **This month we will be launching a new Doorstep Crime campaign.**

Rogue traders are going online and targeting people with fraudulent quotes, demanding money up front and then not delivering on the service!

How to spot a rogue trader: According to a recent survey, more than half of Britons are not confident they could distinguish a rogue trader from a verified trader. One way to do this is to ask family or friends for their recommendations. Research shows that roughly six in ten homeowners have hired someone based on this. If you're not sure, research more!

The campaign will consist of posters, leaflets and social media posts. We can send these materials out as digital versions upon request. Please get in touch with us at [friendsagainstsams@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:friendsagainstsams@surreycc.gov.uk) or alternatively get in touch using our freepost address and we can send out leaflets. Follow us on social media!

**Twitter - @AgainstScams**

**Facebook - @FriendsAgainst**



## Ukraine Crisis Scams



Fraudsters are masquerading as victims of the war in Ukraine in an attempt to steal money from well-meaning UK residents. These criminals are also seizing on people's eagerness to help victims of the crisis by creating false charity websites to trick people into donating.

### **How the scams work**

Three specific scams have started to emerge as fraudsters seek to exploit the situation. The first is a donation scam. Fraudsters bombard people with emails or text messages in an attempt to encourage them to give money to victims of the war. The messages often include a link to a false charity website. The second is a scam which uses emotional posts from fraudsters pretending to be victims of the war asking for money. Thirdly, there is a variation of a common scam in which an individual claims to be a Ukrainian businessman trying to move money out of the country, and therefore needs to use a bank account outside the country. In reality it is a fraudster attempting to steal that volunteer's bank details and drain their account.

HMRC's director general for customer services, has urged people not to be rushed, and to double check via a dedicated page on the government website (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/identify-hmrc-related-scam-phone-calls-emails-and-text-messages>)

To learn more about scams, visit [www.friendsagainstsams.org.uk](http://www.friendsagainstsams.org.uk)

## Enforcement News

### Businessman jailed for 30 months in solar panel scam

A recent article from our contact in the southwest, Devon, posted on 21<sup>st</sup> March explained how people were scammed when buying solar panels – and how now a businessman has been sentenced to 30 months in jail and banned from being a company director for six years for his part.

At Exeter Crown Court on Friday March 19 Mark McCracken, 44, of Hestercombe Close, Bridgwater, Somerset was sentenced following an investigation by the Heart of the southwest Trading Standards Service. One of the selling points was that customers, with 'eligible' solar PV, could claim payments from the government, called Feed-in Tariffs, for energy created. One of the sales pitches was that the installations 'would pay for themselves.' However, despite these claims, Intelligent Solar Limited was not signed up to the Renewable Energy Consumer Code, a pre-condition to enable customers to claim these payments. A financial investigation under the Proceeds of Crime Act will now be carried out to find any assets that might be used to pay compensation to the victims. If you're not sure, research more!

### The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)



The UK's independent authority set up to uphold information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals.

In March the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) announced fines totalling **£405,000** to five companies responsible for over **750,000** unwanted marketing calls targeted at older, vulnerable people. The ICO also issued these companies with enforcement notices that require them to immediately stop making these predatory calls.

After receiving information from, *Action Fraud*, *Trading Standards*, the consumer group *Which?* and the call blocker provider *trueCall*, the ICO began investigating a number of companies that were calling people to sell insurance products or services for white goods and other large household appliances. Many of the complainants said the people receiving the calls were vulnerable, with some having been suffering with underlying health conditions. The ICO investigation found that these companies were deliberately targeting older people by buying marketing data lists from third parties, specifically asking for personal information.

One victim explained that her elderly brother was a target of nuisance callers selling white goods insurance. She went on to say: "Last year my older brother said he was receiving a high number of nuisance calls. He asked me to take a look at his finances as he had concerns. Almost immediately, I noticed a lot of monthly direct debits for white goods insurance policies. Some were duplicate payments for the same goods, and there were one-off payments worth £300".

The ICO has also welcomed proposals in the government consultation 'Data: a new direction' to strengthen the ICO's powers to take action against companies that breach UK electronic marketing rules – including potentially increasing the fines that can be imposed for nuisance calls up to a maximum of £17.4 million or 4% of global turnover so they are aligned with those under UK GDPR, giving the ICO the power to take action on calls sent, as well as received, and the power to carry out compulsory audits of rogue companies suspected to be knowingly breaking the rules.

For more information about the ICO's work to tackle nuisance calls visit [ico.org.uk/nuisancecalls](https://ico.org.uk/nuisancecalls).

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